

Walmart U.S. Post-Thanksgiving Day Event Plan Statement

Customer and associate safety is always a top priority for us. This holiday season is no exception. Store-specific plans for all Walmart U.S. locations were developed in consultation with leading safety experts in the sports and entertainment industries.

Each plan addresses three areas:

- Customer approach and entry into the store;
- Customer flow throughout the store and around promotional merchandise; and
- Flow through the checkout aisles and away from the store.

As an added measure, most of our U.S. stores will be open 24 hours for our post-Thanksgiving Day events. Our in-store specials will be available in all U.S. stores starting at 5:00 a.m.

We are committed to looking for ways to make our stores even safer for our customers and associates this holiday season. We are confident our customers can look forward to a safe and enjoyable shopping experience at Walmart.

Walmart Creates Crowd-Control Plan for Black Friday Safety by Chris Burritt Bloomberg News
November 9, 2009

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. has developed plans to manage holiday crowds shopping at its 3,500 U.S. stores after an employee died in a "Black Friday" trampling a year ago.

Walmart, the world's largest retailer, consulted with sports and entertainment safety experts to handle shoppers waiting to enter its stores, David Tovar, a company spokesman, said today in a telephone interview. The plans, specific to each store, also help direct the flow of shoppers when they're in the stores, check out and leave, he said.

The Nov. 28, 2008, death of Jdimytai Damour, a temporary worker trampled as he manned the front doors of a Walmart store in Valley Stream, New York, was one of several incidents in the past year leading some retailers to increase safety precautions, National Retail Federation executives said today. Jockeying for discounted merchandise may intensify during the holidays as rising unemployment makes consumers more desperate for bargains and retailers deepen markdowns to spur sales, they said.

"From a consumer's standpoint, the appetite for deals and bargains is elevated," Ellen Davis, a spokeswoman for the Washington-based industry trade group, told reporters on a conference call. "As a result, retailers need to understand that many of these sales and promotional periods might draw customers who are more insistent about getting a good deal."

The holiday season traditionally starts on the day after Thanksgiving, so-called Black Friday, which falls on Nov. 26 this year.

In May, Walmart agreed to a crowd-control plan for Black Friday events at its New York stores to avoid prosecution in Damour's death. The agreement with Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice didn't include an admission of guilt or wrongdoing by the retailer.

Dress Rehearsals

Some retailers are holding dress rehearsals to test their safety plans before the holidays, said Rhett Asher, the NRF's vice president of loss prevention.

The NRF recommended that merchants and shopping malls coordinate crowd control with local police, assign employees to interact with shoppers waiting in line and spread discounted merchandise throughout their stores to avoid herding.

Walmart, based in Bentonville, Arkansas, doesn't belong to the NRF, Tovar said.

"We are confident our customers can look forward to a safe and enjoyable shopping experience at Walmart," Tovar said.

Walmart rose 75 cents to \$52 at 4:15 p.m. in New York Stock Exchange composite trading. The shares have slumped 7.2 percent this year.

Black Friday doorbuster sales: Retailers hope to bring order before chaos by Sandra M. Jones
Chicago Tribune November 10, 2009

Take a nation of retailers on edge about falling sales. Toss in a crowd of bargain-hungry consumers addicted to deals. Keep them apart for hours before dawn with only a glass door separating them, and you have the makings of a Black Friday calamity.

It has been a year since a store worker was trampled to death in a day-after- Thanksgiving doorbuster stampede at a Long Island, N.Y., Wal-Mart. Now, less than three weeks before the busiest and most heavily promoted shopping day of the year arrives again, the retail industry is going out of its way to make sure this year's holiday shopping season doesn't spin out of control.

The National Retail Federation, the retail industry trade group, issued for the first time crowd control guidelines as financial pressures compel retailers to get more aggressive with promotions and shoppers get more aggressive about finding deals.

In another first, Wal-Mart will keep almost all of its stores open on Thanksgiving and through the night into Friday, spokesman David Tovar said. The doorbuster deals will still begin at 5 a.m., but the measure will allow the discount chain to avoid long lines of shoppers waiting outside the door, he said.

"There's a great psychological pressure that happens around waiting for a door to open," said Paula Rosenblum, managing partner at Retail Systems Research LLC. "I've never felt doorbusters were good for the industry. Nobody makes a lot of money on them. All they do is create a lot of frenzy."

That's particularly true on Black Friday, which gets its nickname from the fact that retailers have said they begin turning a profit for the year on that day.

Despite retailers' attempts to get consumers to start their holiday shopping early, 16 percent of consumers expect to begin on Black Friday, up from 10 percent in 2008, according to the International Council of Shopping Centers and Goldman Sachs 2009 Holiday Spending survey.

"It's no secret that customers are working hard to find the best deals," said Rhett Asher, vice president of loss prevention at the National Retail Federation. "Retailers are going to have to go to great lengths ... to drive traffic into the stores."

The trade group on Monday issued a list of measures retailers should take to keep crowds from turning unruly.

The recommendations include placing stanchions or barriers inside and outside of the store to manage traffic flow, announcing the availability and locations of products over the store intercom, handing out vouchers for limited supplies of merchandise to the first customers in line, handing out a map of the store, spreading out sale items throughout the store and giving store managers authority to make decisions as events unfold.

Best Buy Co. holds dress rehearsals the week of Black Friday to train staff on handling the rush of shoppers. The consumer electronics chain also passes out product vouchers before doors open.

"Just letting people know that if you're among the first 50 in line, your product is guaranteed, helps," said Monica Salamon, store manager at the new Best Buy on North Michigan Avenue. Last year more than 300 people lined up outside the Best Buy store at Armitage and Elston avenues starting at 8 p.m. Thanksgiving, she said.

Several years ago, Sears and Kmart began handing out tickets to customers in line for doorbuster sales and announcing when sale items are out of stock, said spokesman Chris Brathwaite.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. agreed to improve its Black Friday crowd control management in the wake of the Long Island trampling death as part of an agreement in May with the Nassau County district attorney's office.

Wal-Mart said it planned to expand the steps to the rest of its stores in time for the 2009 holiday shopping season.

Wal-Mart will address how customers approach, enter and move throughout the store, among other issues.

"The Wal-Mart incident last year made a lot of retailers rethink their approach," said Dan de Grandpre, editor of Dealnews.com. "But from the retailers' standpoint, they want to make the TV news with the rush of shoppers going into the store. That's good press. It may take the fun out of it, but it will be safer."

Calming the Black Friday Crowds
by Stephanie Rosenbloom
The New York Times
November 11, 2009

A year after an unruly crowd trampled a worker to death at a Wal-Mart store, the nation's retailers are preparing for another Black Friday, the blockbuster shopping day after Thanksgiving. Along with offering \$300 laptops and \$99 navigation devices, stores are planning new safety measures to make sure the festive day does not take another deadly turn.

Last year, frenzied shoppers at a Wal-Mart in Valley Stream, N.Y., trampled Jdimytai Damour, a temporary store worker who died soon afterward. To prevent any repeat, Wal-Mart has sharply changed how it intends to manage the crowds.

That new plan, developed by experts who have wrangled throngs at events like the Super Bowl and the Olympics, will affect how customers approach and enter the stores, shop, check out and exit. Each store will have its own customized plan. The hope is for an orderly Black Friday, a seemingly incongruous notion.

The most significant change at Wal-Mart is that the majority of its discount stores (as opposed to its Supercenters) will open Thanksgiving morning at 6 a.m. and stay open through Friday evening. Last year, those stores closed Thanksgiving evening and reopened early Friday morning. By keeping the stores open for 24 hours, Wal-Mart is hoping for a steady flow of shoppers instead of mammoth crowds swelling outside its stores in the wee hours of Friday.

In another new twist this year, shoppers at Wal-Mart will not have to sprint toward a pile of flat-screen televisions and scuffle with one another to get one. Rather, customers will be able to enter the store at any time and line up at merchandise displays for the must-have items on their lists. When the products go on sale Friday at 5 a.m., workers will supervise the lines, giving shoppers the merchandise in the order in which they joined the line -- until the goods are out of stock.

(Only a small percentage of stores will not be open 24 hours; most Wal-Mart Supercenters are already open 24 hours.)

Another problem in the past was the bottleneck at store entrances. Like many big-box retailers, Wal-Mart does not have multiple entrances and exits to spread around customer traffic. So this year the chain will put workers in front of its stores to direct customers and keep them moving.

"We are committed to looking for ways to make our stores even safer for our customers and associates this holiday season," said David Tovar, a spokesman for Wal-Mart, adding that the retailer was "confident our customers can look forward to a safe and enjoyable shopping experience at Wal-Mart."

Aggressive shoppers are common the day after Thanksgiving. So crowd control plans, which vary by retailer, are critical. And they are especially important now, given the economy. Newly frugal consumers want more for less, and stores plan to drum up sales with stunning deals.

This year, for the first time, the National Retail Federation created a comprehensive set of guidelines for crowd control at stores. The guidelines note that special markdowns and historically low discounts have led to larger crowds.

"Retailers are very much trying to make themselves stand out in an environment like this," Ellen Davis, a spokeswoman for the industry group, said in a conference call this week. But she added that "retailers need to understand that many of these sales and promotional periods might draw customers who are more insistent about getting a good deal."

The federation said retailers were performing dress rehearsals with their employees. Some stores plan to serve drinks to shoppers, or offer entertainment while they are in line, to maintain calm. Also, the stores say that creating a rapport with customers makes news of sellouts and long lines more palatable.

Indeed, Peter Conway, general manager of a Best Buy in Westbury, N.Y., has made a habit of arriving at his store at 7 p.m. Thanksgiving night to chat with shoppers lined up outside.

"I'm outside talking with my customers, just getting to know them, seeing what they're there for," he said. "I'm very clear with them: 'There's not going to be any running.' "

For years, Best Buy has controlled crowds by sending teams of workers into the parking lots to dole out tickets for its so-called door-busters -- hot items like digital cameras and laptops at exceedingly low prices. Tickets are given out about 3 a.m. and each customer is allowed one ticket for each door-buster item they intend to buy.

"They know if they have a ticket, they're guaranteed they have that product," Mr. Conway said. "It creates ease of mind."

To keep shoppers from running aimlessly around its stores, Best Buy employees hand out maps, and they mark popular items with colored balloons that can be seen from anywhere in the store.

Many retailers, including Kohl's and Toys "R" Us, said they were not changing their crowd management plans because they had not had problems.

After the death of Mr. Damour, Wal-Mart settled a case with the district attorney of Nassau County in New York. Wal-Mart agreed to create a \$400,000 compensation fund, give \$1.5 million to social service programs, and offer 50 jobs to area high school students each year for three years.

Rhett Asher, the National Retail Federation's senior asset protection adviser, said during a conference call that big box stores and mall stores had different security issues. Malls are more bustling, public places with multiple entrances -- so there tend to be fewer problems.

Indeed, crowd control is not as much of an issue for Macy's as it is for big-box stores, a spokesman said, because multiple entrances serve to disperse crowds.

Still, retailers of all sorts are making preparations. In just the last month, crowds of deal-hungry shoppers have created problems. In one instance, Dwight Howard of the Orlando Magic said on Twitter that he would give away copies of his NBA Live 2010 basketball video game to the first five people who showed up at a particular GameStop store. Chaos ensued. Also last month, a woman at a Burlington Coat Factory store in Ohio said she had won the lottery and would treat her fellow shoppers to new clothes. When it turned out she was lying, a riot broke out.

"No matter how seamless and airtight you think this is," Ms. Davis said of retailers' plans, "the unexpected can happen."

Wal-Mart has safety plans for big sale day by Andrea Chang Los Angeles Times November 11, 2009

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. will keep most of its U.S. locations open overnight on Thanksgiving to ease the crowding that led to the trampling death of a store employee on Black Friday a year earlier.

The retail giant said it was hoping the extended hours would prevent long lines from forming because shoppers would be able to wait inside the stores before the chain's day-after-Thanksgiving specials go on sale at 5 a.m.

Black Friday, so named because retailers used to view it as the day they went into the black financially, is notoriously one of the most hectic shopping days of the holiday season, with shoppers pushing and jostling for deals on electronics, apparel and toys. Last year, a mob of bargain-hungry shoppers stormed a Wal-Mart in Valley Stream, N.Y., trampling temporary worker Jdimytai Damour.

Some industry watchers are worried that crowds could be even more aggressive this year, as frugal shoppers have indicated they will rely heavily on discounts and specials.

In addition to keeping stores open throughout Thanksgiving night, Wal-Mart said it had store-specific safety plans in place for the Nov. 27 sales.

The Bentonville, Ark.-based chain is also planning to spread out its deals around its stores to better control crowds, company spokeswoman Daphne Moore said.

"Customer and associate safety is a top priority for us, and this year is no different," she said.

Walmart to Stay Open to Avoid 'Black Friday' Lines by Chris Burritt Bloomberg News
November 10, 2009

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. will leave most of its 833 U.S. discount stores open overnight on Thanksgiving to avoid crowds gathering to get specials the following morning after an employee was trampled to death a year ago.

Most of those stores will remain open after their regular closing hour of 11 p.m., allowing customers to remain inside to wait for the "Black Friday" special prices that start at 5 a.m., David Tovar, a company spokesman, said today in a telephone interview.

Walmart, the world's largest retailer, developed plans for each of its stores to manage the flow of customers as they get in, seek discounted merchandise, check out and leave on "Black Friday." The store in Valley Stream, New York, where Jdimytai Damour, a temporary worker, was trampled on Nov. 28, 2008, is among those staying open overnight, Tovar said.

"We would anticipate not having these long lines outside the stores," Tovar said from Bentonville, Arkansas, where Walmart is based. The company's 2,705 supercenters, which sell general merchandise and groceries, already operate 24 hours a day.

The holiday shopping season traditionally starts on so-called Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, which falls on Nov. 26 this year. Jockeying for discounted merchandise may intensify this year as rising unemployment makes consumers more desperate for bargains and retailers deepen markdowns to spur sales, National Retail Federation executives said yesterday on a conference call.

Spreading Items

The NRF recommended merchants coordinate crowd control with local police and assign employees to interact with shoppers, as well as spread discounted items, which Walmart plans to do.

Such steps are intended to "lessen the anxiety of those lines of customers," Rhett Asher, the NRF's vice president of loss prevention, said on the call. "The times are tough for everybody. It's no secret that customers are working harder for those deals."

In May, Walmart agreed to a crowd-control plan for Black Friday events at its New York stores to avoid prosecution in Damour's death. The agreement with Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice didn't include an admission of guilt or wrongdoing by the retailer.

Walmart rose 31 cents to \$52.31 at 4:01 p.m. in New York Stock Exchange composite trading. The shares have slumped 6.7 percent this year.

Wal-Mart plan after tragedy Crowd control efforts after '08 trampling death Stores to open 24 hours starting Thanksgiving Day by Keiko Morris Newsday [NY] November 12, 2009

Wal-Mart Stores said yesterday its locations will stay open for more than 24 hours starting Thanksgiving Day and will incorporate crowd-control measures on the holiday weekend to prevent the frenzied rush that led to a trampling death last year at a Black Friday sale in Valley Stream.

The retailer said most of its stores in the United States will remain open from Thanksgiving Day into Friday - the traditional launch of the holiday season known as Black Friday - and will allow customers to begin to line up at different locations within the stores to wait for specific items to go on sale at 5 a.m. Friday.

Wal-Mart also said it has incorporated into its nationwide planning for Black Friday some of the crowd management strategies negotiated with the Nassau County district attorney's office last May after last year's trampling death of Jdimytai Damour.

Nassau County Police Commissioner Lawrence Mulvey said yesterday he is anticipating calm and order at the retailer's post-Thanksgiving sales event.

"We reviewed the plans and are quite satisfied that they [Wal-Mart] have taken the necessary steps to prepare for holiday shopping," said Mulvey.

"I think they are taking some of the best-practice ideas we came up with last year after the tragedy."

Wal-Mart said in a statement it consulted with safety experts in the sports and entertainment industries to develop store-specific plans for all U.S. locations. Each plan looked at how customers approach and enter the store, how they check out and leave, as well as how customers move around the store and near the biggest bargains, Wal-Mart said.

"We took elements from New York and applied them to other states," said Dave Tovar, a Wal-Mart spokesman. "We looked at each store on a store-by-store basis and developed specific plans for all of our locations."

Many of the retailer's crowd-control strategies were the result of its settlement with the Nassau DA's office in May, when it negotiated an agreement to avoid criminal charges, according to Meg Reiss of the investigations division. At the center of that deal was the creation of Wal-Mart's crowd management plans for its New York State stores, she added.

Besides explaining the sales process to customers, the steps include a crowd-management staff to maintain orderly entry into the store and placement of promotional or hot items throughout the store to ensure manageable customer traffic.

Mulvey noted that many retailers have ratcheted up their Black Friday safety plans in light of last year's tragedy. For the first time, the National Retail Federation issued crowd management

guidelines for special sales events. But many retailers like Best Buy and Target have been using such crowd control strategies for years.

Best Buy, for example, hands out tickets for limited sale items, limits the number of customers entering the store and sends staff to talk to people waiting on line, said Peter Conway, general manager of the Westbury Best Buy.

"Reducing anxiety is really a big piece," Conway said, "getting there early in the night and just talking to people and putting them at ease."

Black Friday strategy

Wal-Mart's crowd management plan includes the following steps, which will be implemented at all its New York stores. Other locations nationwide will incorporate various elements of the strategy. Customers can begin to line up for Black Friday specials the night before inside the stores near the items that will go on sale at 5 a.m.

Crowd management staff will maintain orderly entry into the store.

Employees will hand out maps and maintain constant communication with customers about procedures and locations of sales items.

Staff will allow customers to use the restrooms without losing their place in line.

Black Friday sales items will be spaced apart from each other and in less busy areas.

Staff will provide clear pathways from the checkout lines to the cash registers and from the exit to the parking lot.

Stores will have trained Quick Response Teams available to assist with any situations that arise.

Wal-Mart to add crowd-control measures for Black Friday rush; to keep stores open all night by Jill Zeman Bleed Associated Press Newswires November 11, 2009

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) - Wal-Mart Stores said Wednesday it will keep its stores open 24 hours and take new crowd-control measures Thanksgiving weekend after a temporary employee was trampled to death in a Black Friday rush last year.

The world's largest retailer says day-after-Thanksgiving sales will begin at 5 a.m. Nov. 27, but most U.S. stores will be open 24 hours to prevent a mad dash. The announcement doesn't affect most of Wal-Mart's Supercenters, which are already open 24 hours. Spokesman David Tovar said the change affects about 800 stores that aren't currently open round-the-clock.

Instead lining up outside Walmart, customers can gather in different areas of the store, waiting for the deals to begin, Tovar said.

"If you've got a 200,000-square-foot store, people will be dispersed throughout the store instead of lined up outside the store," Tovar said.

Federal safety regulators cited Wal-Mart for inadequate crowd management after the Nov. 28, 2008, death of a temporary employee at a Long Island, N.Y., store. A crowd of shoppers broke down the store's doors, trapping employee Jdimytai Damour, who died of asphyxiation.

Wal-Mart was required to create improved crowd management plans for all its 92 New York stores as part of a deal with prosecutors that avoided criminal charges in the trampling death.

It also was required to set up a \$400,000 victims' compensation fund, and give \$1.5 million to social services programs and nonprofit groups.

The agreement included no admission of guilt by Wal-Mart.

As part of the settlement, Wal-Mart consulted with safety experts who've worked with the Super Bowl, Olympics, major concerts and national political conventions to come up with safety plans for each of its stores. Crowd-management staff should make sure people are orderly as they enter the store, while maps may be provided with locations of Black Friday deals, according to the safety recommendations.

The plan calls for the hottest items -- marked-down TVs, toys and laptop computers, for example -- to be placed far apart to prevent big crowds from gathering.

Each store-specific plan looked at how customers approach and enter the store, how they check out and leave, as well as how customers move around the store and near the biggest bargains.

Shoppers around the country line up early outside stores on the day after Thanksgiving in the annual bargain-hunting ritual known as Black Friday. It got that name because it traditionally was considered the day stores broke into profitability for the full year.

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After the death of Mr. Damour, Wal-Mart settled a case with the district attorney of Nassau County in New York. Wal-Mart agreed to create a \$400,000 compensation fund, give \$1.5 million to social service programs, and offer 50 jobs to area high school students each year for three years.

Rhett Asher, the National Retail Federation's senior asset protection adviser, said during a conference call that big box stores and mall stores had different security issues. Malls are more bustling, public places with multiple entrances -- so there tend to be fewer problems.

Indeed, crowd control is not as much of an issue for Macy's as it is for big-box stores, a spokesman said, because multiple entrances serve to disperse crowds.

Still, retailers of all sorts are making preparations. In just the last month, crowds of deal-hungry shoppers have created problems. In one instance, Dwight Howard of the Orlando Magic said on Twitter that he would give away copies of his NBA Live 2010 basketball video game to the first five people who showed up at a particular GameStop store. Chaos ensued. Also last month, a woman at a Burlington Coat Factory store in Ohio said she had won the lottery and would treat her fellow shoppers to new clothes. When it turned out she was lying, a riot broke out.

"No matter how seamless and airtight you think this is," Ms. Davis said of retailers' plans, "the unexpected can happen."

Wal-Mart has safety plans for big sale day by Andrea Chang Los Angeles Times November 11, 2009

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. will keep most of its U.S. locations open overnight on Thanksgiving to ease the crowding that led to the trampling death of a store employee on Black Friday a year earlier.

The retail giant said it was hoping the extended hours would prevent long lines from forming because shoppers would be able to wait inside the stores before the chain's day-after-Thanksgiving specials go on sale at 5 a.m.

Black Friday, so named because retailers used to view it as the day they went into the black financially, is notoriously one of the most hectic shopping days of the holiday season, with shoppers pushing and jostling for deals on electronics, apparel and toys. Last year, a mob of bargain-hungry shoppers stormed a Wal-Mart in Valley Stream, N.Y., trampling temporary worker Jdimytai Damour.

Some industry watchers are worried that crowds could be even more aggressive this year, as frugal shoppers have indicated they will rely heavily on discounts and specials.

In addition to keeping stores open throughout Thanksgiving night, Wal-Mart said it had store-specific safety plans in place for the Nov. 27 sales.

The Bentonville, Ark.-based chain is also planning to spread out its deals around its stores to better control crowds, company spokeswoman Daphne Moore said.

"Customer and associate safety is a top priority for us, and this year is no different," she said.

Walmart to Stay Open to Avoid 'Black Friday' Lines by Chris Burritt Bloomberg News
November 10, 2009

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. will leave most of its 833 U.S. discount stores open overnight on Thanksgiving to avoid crowds gathering to get specials the following morning after an employee was trampled to death a year ago.

Most of those stores will remain open after their regular closing hour of 11 p.m., allowing customers to remain inside to wait for the "Black Friday" special prices that start at 5 a.m., David Tovar, a company spokesman, said today in a telephone interview.

Walmart, the world's largest retailer, developed plans for each of its stores to manage the flow of customers as they get in, seek discounted merchandise, check out and leave on "Black Friday." The store in Valley Stream, New York, where Jdimytai Damour, a temporary worker, was trampled on Nov. 28, 2008, is among those staying open overnight, Tovar said.

"We would anticipate not having these long lines outside the stores," Tovar said from Bentonville, Arkansas, where Walmart is based. The company's 2,705 supercenters, which sell general merchandise and groceries, already operate 24 hours a day.

The holiday shopping season traditionally starts on so-called Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, which falls on Nov. 26 this year. Jockeying for discounted merchandise may intensify this year as rising unemployment makes consumers more desperate for bargains and retailers deepen markdowns to spur sales, National Retail Federation executives said yesterday on a conference call.

Spreading Items

The NRF recommended merchants coordinate crowd control with local police and assign employees to interact with shoppers, as well as spread discounted items, which Walmart plans to do.

Such steps are intended to "lessen the anxiety of those lines of customers," Rhett Asher, the NRF's vice president of loss prevention, said on the call. "The times are tough for everybody. It's no secret that customers are working harder for those deals."

In May, Walmart agreed to a crowd-control plan for Black Friday events at its New York stores to avoid prosecution in Damour's death. The agreement with Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice didn't include an admission of guilt or wrongdoing by the retailer.

Walmart rose 31 cents to \$52.31 at 4:01 p.m. in New York Stock Exchange composite trading. The shares have slumped 6.7 percent this year.

Wal-Mart plan after tragedy Crowd control efforts after '08 trampling death Stores to open 24 hours starting Thanksgiving Day by Keiko Morris Newsday [NY] November 12, 2009

Wal-Mart Stores said yesterday its locations will stay open for more than 24 hours starting Thanksgiving Day and will incorporate crowd-control measures on the holiday weekend to prevent the frenzied rush that led to a trampling death last year at a Black Friday sale in Valley Stream.

The retailer said most of its stores in the United States will remain open from Thanksgiving Day into Friday - the traditional launch of the holiday season known as Black Friday - and will allow customers to begin to line up at different locations within the stores to wait for specific items to go on sale at 5 a.m. Friday.

Wal-Mart also said it has incorporated into its nationwide planning for Black Friday some of the crowd management strategies negotiated with the Nassau County district attorney's office last May after last year's trampling death of Jdimytai Damour.

Nassau County Police Commissioner Lawrence Mulvey said yesterday he is anticipating calm and order at the retailer's post-Thanksgiving sales event.

"We reviewed the plans and are quite satisfied that they [Wal-Mart] have taken the necessary steps to prepare for holiday shopping," said Mulvey.

"I think they are taking some of the best-practice ideas we came up with last year after the tragedy."

Wal-Mart said in a statement it consulted with safety experts in the sports and entertainment industries to develop store-specific plans for all U.S. locations. Each plan looked at how customers approach and enter the store, how they check out and leave, as well as how customers move around the store and near the biggest bargains, Wal-Mart said.

"We took elements from New York and applied them to other states," said Dave Tovar, a Wal-Mart spokesman. "We looked at each store on a store-by-store basis and developed specific plans for all of our locations."

Many of the retailer's crowd-control strategies were the result of its settlement with the Nassau DA's office in May, when it negotiated an agreement to avoid criminal charges, according to Meg Reiss of the investigations division. At the center of that deal was the creation of Wal-Mart's crowd management plans for its New York State stores, she added.

Besides explaining the sales process to customers, the steps include a crowd-management staff to maintain orderly entry into the store and placement of promotional or hot items throughout the store to ensure manageable customer traffic.

Mulvey noted that many retailers have ratcheted up their Black Friday safety plans in light of last year's tragedy. For the first time, the National Retail Federation issued crowd management

Not all retailers, however, feel compelled to change their practices in effort to capture consumers earlier. "We are not doing any 'Black Friday' promotions before Black Friday," said J.C. Penney spokeswoman Kate Coultas.

Whether consumers respond to retailers early promotions remains to be seen, since Black Friday is still two-and-a-half weeks away.

And Black Friday itself will still be as promotional as usual, with retailers bringing in so-called door-busters, like limited numbers of very low-priced TVs or highly discounted apparel, to get customers excited.

But moves taken now could help mitigate last minute panic -- not by shoppers, but by retailers who could, even with their slimmed down inventories, end up overstocked once the holidays end if customers don't turn out.

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As Black Friday Approaches, NRF Releases Crowd Management Guidelines For Retailers

[View NRF's Crowd Management Guidelines](#)

[Read a blog post](#) from NRF's Joe LaRocca about crowd control

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As Black Friday Approaches, NRF Releases Crowd Management Guidelines for Retailers

Washington, November 9, 2009 – As one of the busiest shopping days of the year approaches, retailers are focusing on one key component of their holiday plans: crowd control. With the help of several retailers and their loss prevention teams, the National Retail Federation has released Crowd Management Guidelines in addition to a step-by-step checklist for retailers planning for holiday crowds. The set of guidelines also addresses unexpected emergency management of crowds.

"With Black Friday upon us, retailers are reviewing their contingency plans to make sure store associates and security are well prepared for the big day," said Joe LaRocca, Senior Asset Protection Advisor, NRF. "Whether it's the holiday season, a celebrity appearance or an unplanned situation that requires security, retailers are constantly planning and preparing for even the most chaotic situations."

The guidelines outline the following essential components of a crowd control and/or emergency plan, including:

- Promotional/holiday sales and special events
- Sales and events versus emergency management crowd controls
- Mall-based retailers versus non mall-based retailers
- Crowd management guidelines references and contingency plans

In addition to the outlined assessments, the guidelines also offer specific checklists for retailers to use when working on a crowd control plan. Event type, staffing and training, communication, physical and environmental considerations and line formations are among a few of the factors that retailers should take into account for their emergency and crowd control plans.

The National Retail Federation is the world's largest retail trade association, with membership that comprises all retail formats and channels of distribution including department, specialty, discount, catalog, Internet, independent stores, chain restaurants, drug stores and grocery stores as well as the industry's key trading partners of retail goods and services. NRF represents an industry with more than 1.6 million U.S. retail establishments, more than 24 million employees - about one in five American workers - and 2008 sales of \$4.6 trillion. As the industry umbrella group, NRF also represents more than 100 state, national and international retail associations. www.nrf.com.

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